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MARY WHITE—MRS ROBERT MORRIS

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ON THE OCCASION OF THE REINTERMENT OF THE REMAINS

OF

COLONEL THOMAS WHITE

BEFORE A REUNION OF HIS DESCENDANTS

HALLS—WHITES—MORRISES

BY

CHARLES HENRY HART

PHILADELPHIA
1878

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257

COLLINS, PRINTER.

TO

MY MOTHER

THESE PAGES

ARE

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

MARY WHITE—MRS. ROBERT MORRIS.

I have been invited here to-day to perform not an easy task. The life of a woman whose chief distinction is the prominence of her husband, is not likely to be possessed of characteristics and events, apart from him, of sufficient moment and interest to be preserved alive for half a century after her decease, and bear repeating at the end of that time. And yet this is a grateful task; for by performing it I hope to gratify that most laudable desire of man's heart, to know something of his progenitors, that, by imitating their virtues and transmitting the same to his successors, he may help to improve and benefit the human race. With this end and aim in view, I will relate all I know of Mrs. Robert Morris—Mary, youngest child of Thomas and Esther [Heulings] White. She was born in the city of Philadelphia on the 13th day of April, 1749, and on the 21st of May was baptized at Christ Church. Of her maidenhood, no incidents, even by tradition, are preserved, save in the opening verse of Colonel Shippen's "*Lines written in an Assembly Room*,"[1] to commemorate the beauty and charms of Philadelphia's belles, where he says:—

> "In lovely White's most pleasing form,
> What various graces meet!
> How blest with every striking charm!
> How languishingly sweet!"

She must, however, have been carefully trained and educated in all womanly accomplishments to have enabled her to fill,

[1] Shippen Papers, edited by Thomas Balch. Phila. 1855.

with so much ease, and dignity, and grace, the position in which she was afterwards placed.

On the second of March, 1769, before she was twenty, she was united in marriage by the Reverend Richard Peters, to Robert Morris, the future financier of the American Revolution. Mr. Morris was a native of Great Britain, having been born in Liverpool on the 31st of January, 1734. His father, also Robert Morris, came to this country and settled at Oxford, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where he died July 12th, 1750, when his son was in his seventeenth year. Robert came to Philadelphia, and entered the counting-house of Mr. Charles Willing, the first merchant of his day; and in 1754, at the age of twenty, formed a copartnership with his son, Thomas Willing, which lasted a period of thirty-nine years, and the firm of Willing & Morris became the best known and largest importing house in the colonies. Early taking an active interest in the welfare of the colonies, Mr. Morris was appointed by the Assembly of Pennsylvania one of the delegates to the second Congress, and entered upon a public career so well known as to render a relation of its details on this occasion unnecessary.

Towards the close of the year 1776, when the British approached Philadelphia, and Congress retired to Baltimore, Mr. Morris remained in the city as one of the committee intrusted with plenary power to perform all public acts. Mrs. Morris followed the Congress, and took up her abode at this very house where we are now assembled, and where her mother and father were visiting her step-sister, Mrs. Hall, and here she remained until the early part of the following March. On the 20th of December she writes to Mr. Morris: "I long to give you an account of the many difficulty's and uneasyness we have experienced in this journey. Indeed, my spirits were very unable to the task after that greatest conflict flying from home; the sufferings of our poor little Tom distressed us all, and without the affectionate assistance of Mr. Hall and the skilfulness of Dr. Cole, whose services I shall never forget, I don't know what might have been the consequence, as it was a boil of an uncommon nature, and required

the surgeon's hand. We had reason to apprehend, too, we should lose our goods; the many circumstances of this affair I must leave till I see you, as neither my patience nor paper will hold out. Only that Mr. Hall was obliged, when in a few miles of his house, to return to Christiana and retake his vessel, which he accomplished by the assistance of Mr. Hancock; . . . . but after all the dangers, I've the pleasure to inform you we are safely housed in this hospitable mansion." In another part of the letter she writes: "I thought I was prepared for every misfortune; for, as you observe, of late we have little else. Yet when Lee is taken prisoner, who is proof against those feelings his loss must occasion, and add to that the triumph of our enemy's and the mortification his sensibility must suffer. Mr. Hall has heard it contradicted at Bush, and that Mr. Hancock thinks from the circumstance it's a false report. God send it may be so, but I've observed pieces of bad news are seldom contradicted."

On the 30th of the same month, upon receipt of the news of the victory at Trenton, she writes to Mr. Morris: "We had been for many days impatiently wishing for a letter from you, as the news we hear from any other quarter is not to be depended on; but when the welcomed one arrived, which brought those glad tidings, it more than compensated for what our late unfortunate circumstances prepared our minds to expect, which was nothing more than our Army's being on the defensive, and fearing least their numbers were not even equal to that, but retreat as usual; but I hope, indeed, the tide is turned, and that our great Washington will have the success his virtues deserve, and rout that impious army who, from no other principle but that of enslaving this once happy country, have prosecuted this Cruell War. My father was greatly, *tho' agreeably*, affected at such good news, and I was the happy means of making many joyfull hearts, as we had many guests added to our large Family to celebrate Christmas. Mr. Hall is surprised he has not received orders to March with his Battalion, but only to hold himself in readiness." She again writes to him on the 15th of January, after hearing of the Battle at Princeton: "I have received

five of your letters since my last, besides Mr. Hall's, the contents of which allmost petrified us;—happy had we been had the petrifaction reached our hearts, and made them proof against our feelings in this day of Triall. I suppressed mine all in my power, as I wish to make myself as agreeable as possible to this family, and as they had invited a party of young folks to a Twelfth Cake, I tryed to be cheerful; how could I be really so when hourly in expectation of hearing the determination of so important a Battle, and when the express arrived and pronounced Washington victorious, would you believe it, your Molly could not join in the general rejoicing? No! nor never can at a victory so dearly bought." In her last letter to him before her return, written on the journey, she writes: "We are all well in health, and in want only of your Dear Company to be as happy as the state of our country will admit off."

On March 15th, 1777, she writes to her "mamma" from Philadelphia, addressed "To Mrs. White, at Aquila Hall's, Esqr., near Bush Town, Maryland."—"Last Wednesday noon I had the pleasure to arrive safe in dear Philadelphia, after a much pleasanter journey than I expected from our setting off, and it made me very happy to find myself at home after so long an absence, with the terrible apprehensions we fled with of never seeing it again." In the same letter she writes: "I suppose Jemmy Hall has told you how everybody exclaims at my thinness; several of my acquaintances did not know me till they had time to recollect, and then declared there was very little traces of my former self." She concludes with: "Duty to my father, and love to sister and Mr. Hall and all the Hospitable Family, whose kindness to me and my exiled family I shall never forget." In a postscript she adds: "Billy has been told that the Congress appoint'd him their Chaplain when in Baltimore, but has not yet heard it from them, and begs it may not be mentioned." The "Billy," here referred to was none other than her brother, the future eminent prelate and father of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country, Bishop White. In a letter on April 1st, she writes: "Mr. Hancock intends resigning his seat in Con-

gress, and going home: it is imagined he will be appointed Governor of Boston. They meant to have complimented Mr. Morris with the Presidentship, but he told the gentlemen who informed him of it he could not serve, as it would interfere entirely with his private business, and so begged it might be dropped. . . . . Don't you feel quite important? I assure you I do, and begin to be reconciled to Independence."

Mrs. Morris had not been at home a month before fears of the approach of Howe necessitated preparations, at least, for seeking safer refuge. She writes to her mother on the 14th of April: "We are preparing for another flight in packing up our furniture and removing them to a new purchase Mr. Morris has made ten miles from Lancaster, no other than the famous House that belonged to Stedman and Steigel at the Iron Works, where, you know, I spent six weeks; so am perfectly well acquainted with the goodness of the House and situation. The reason Mr. Morris made this purchase, he looks upon the other not secure if they come by water. I think myself very lucky in having this Asylum, it being but 8 miles, fine road, from Lancaster, were I expect Mr. Morris will be if he quits this, besides many of my friends and acquaintances. So I now solicit the pleasure of your company at this once famous place, *Instead of Mount*, where, perhaps, we may yet trace some vestages of the late owner's folly, and may prove a useful lesson to us his successors." A fortnight later she writes: "I am yet on dear Philadelphia ground, but expect soon to inhabit the Hills, where we shall remain, if possible, in the enjoyment of all that's beautiful to the eye and grateful to the taste; for, as if to add to our mortification, are we obliged to leave it; nature never appeared there so lovely, nor promised such a profusion of her gifts. We intend sending off our best furniture to Lancaster, with all the linen we can spare, and stores of all kind, that our flight may be attended with as few incumbrances as possible."

"The Hills" spoken of by Mrs. Morris in this last letter, with so much fervor and admiration, was her summer residence which Mr. Morris had purchased in 1770, and laid out in a style and manner unknown in this country at that day.

After it passed out of his hands, it was called Lemon Hill, and now forms that part of Fairmount Park, situate on the east side of the Schuylkill river south of the Girard Avenue Bridge, and north of the old water-works. Here he erected the large house still standing on the knoll of the hill overlooking the boat houses of the Schuylkill Navy, together with extensive hot-houses where he raised all kinds of tropical fruit, a fish-pond, and an ice-house. The "hot-houses" and the "ice-house" were the first introduced into the colonies. The "*famous house*" near Lancaster, which Mr. Morris bought, was none other than that built by the eccentric and doubtful Baron Henry William Steigel, who came to America about 1757, from Manheim, in Germany, and the following year purchased from Charles and Alexander Stedman, of Philadelphia, a portion of a large tract in Lancaster County, where he laid out a town which he called from his native city, Manheim. Here he built an iron furnace and extensive glass works, and erected the magnificent mansion which Mrs. Morris mentions as her proposed refuge from the enemy should they enter Philadelphia. "The Castle," as it was called, was very large, and contained a chapel, where the "Baron" held daily service. The wainscotings, mantel-pieces, and cornices are described as having been very massive and rich, while the arras-tapestry which covered the walls of the parlor, and the porcelain tiles encircling the fire-place, were of the finest order, specimens of each of which have been preserved to the present time. To this "famous house," then, Mr. and Mrs. Morris repaired, when in September, 1777, the near approach of the British army obliged Congress to remove from Philadelphia, first to Lancaster, and afterward to York as a more convenient place, and here they remained until after the evacuation of the city by Sir Henry Clinton and his troops early in the summer of 1778.

On the second of July, 1778, Congress reassembled in Philadelphia. At this period Benedict Arnold had command in the city. Mrs. Morris, writing to her mother in November, says: "I know of no news, unless to tell you that we are very gay is such. We have a great many balls and enter-

tainments, and soon the Assemblys will begin. Tell Mr. Hall even our military gentlemen here are too liberal to make any distinctions between Whig and Tory ladyes—if they make any, it's in favor of the latter, such, strange as it may seem, is the way those things are conducted at present in this city. It originates at Head-quarters, and that I may make some apology for such strange conduct, I must tell you that Cupid has given our little General a more mortal wound than all the host of Britons could, unless his present conduct can expiate for his past—Miss Peggy Shippen is the fair one." This lady, I need hardly say, became Mrs. Benedict Arnold, and suffered with her husband all the ignominy his subsequent actions heaped upon his wretched head.

In the month of September, 1779, Mrs. Morris was called upon to mourn the loss of her father,—Col. Thomas White, who died on the twenty-ninth instant, and to do reverence to whose memory we are assembled here to-day. The event was communicated to her in a letter[1] enclosed in the following from her brother to Mr. Morris:—

My Dear Sir—The event wh. I prepared you to expect in my letter of this morning took place at 8 o'clock this evening. My dear Father's stupor returned at 4, and when he expired it was without ye least pain. The enclosed you will deliver whenever you think proper. You know your presence would be a consolation to us; but should you have leisure, there will hardly be time for you to pay your respects to his remains. They talk of Saturday.

I am, Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend and Brother,

W. WHITE.

Wednesday Evening, 10 o'clock.

Three weeks later her mother wrote to her:—

My Dear Child—Yr. letter was doubly welcome, as it is a long time since I had one from you, and my much altered circumstances makes the filial notice of my children more

[1] For letter to Mrs. Morris, see Vol. I., p. 436, Pa. Mag. of Hist. and Biog.

acceptable to me than ever, but you don't tell whether yr. little fellows are come from Frederick. I think you said last summer they were to come home in October. I should be very sorry to miss seeing them, as it is not likely I shall go up so soon as was expected, for Tommy Hall will not be ready. It seems repugnant to ye laws of nature for me to seek a home out of Philadelphia, and yet it is natural for me to enquire how I shall be able to live there, the necessaries of life here are exorbitant, and with you we are told they are much higher, the two articles of house rent and firing would be saved here, which is a great matter; but there is a providence who governs the world, and to be told we may have a reliance on it, is so great a privilege that nothing but its being a Duty, could cause mankind to revolt from it.

I did not think that the late great event, as it was so long expected, would have affected my spirits so much as it has done. I don't know whether it is most wise or foolish to wish you may never experience the same trial, as it is the general lot to one to be the survivor. I would not have anybody see the above, as it may cause a laugh at what was wrote by one in tears. I was afraid some time ago yr. sister would not long survive Mr. Hall, but she seems now out of danger, tho' in a bad state of health. May you have all the blessings this world can bestow, and when it has an end ten thousand times ten thousand more than it is capable of giving, is the prayer

Of your affectionate,

E. WHITE.

23 October, 1779.

Give my love to Mr. Morris, yr. brother, and Polly White.

Early in the year 1781, Congress became sensible of the necessity of erecting the several departments of the government, similar to those which now exist, in order to give greater strength and efficiency to their executive authority, and Robert Morris was placed at the head of that of finance, with the title of Superintendent; which position he filled until the first of November, 1784, when he resigned. Mrs. Jay, on hearing of the appointment, wrote to Mrs. Morris from Spain: "No

circumstance of a public nature since my absence from America has given me greater satisfaction than Mr. Morris's acceptance of that important office which he at present holds; nor would you, my dear madam, even regret being so frequently obliged to dispense with his company, if you could be witness to the universal satisfaction it has diffused among the friends of our country, but w'd (were you as malicious as myself) even enjoy the confusion of our enemies upon the occasion. Besides the public utility which must arise from the measure, I have a peculiar pleasure, which results from the more frequent mention of the person, from whose abilities and integrity so much is expected, in terms the most grateful to friendship. Your fears for Mr. Morris's health are, I own, too well founded, and I think a little address to draw him into the country, at least of evenings, would be patriotic."

This is not the place to depict the arduous duties which this appointment imposed, but the wisdom of the choice was amply justified by the result; for it is very certain that no other individual in the country combined so comprehensive a knowledge of the subject with which he had to grapple, with that firmness and decision of character and keen sense of honor, which at once attract universal confidence. In consenting to accept the office, Mr. Morris made it a condition that he should have the power to appoint and remove at his pleasure all subordinates connected in any way with his department, and it is a strking evidence of the respect in which his personal qualities were held, that these terms were readily complied with. No one requires to be informed of the effect of his efforts in restoring the public credit,—no person could have accomplished more than he did; the only real cause of wonder is, that with means so limited—in fact without any public means at all—he could have done so much; but he put his shoulder to the wheel, and the much needed end was gained.

The prominence which this appointment gave to Mr. Morris, his wealth, ability, and social position, made his home the centre of all the amenity and civility of the day, and it is as the hostess presiding over this establishment that we have some of the most pleasing pictures of his wife.

After the alliance with France, this country was visited by many Frenchmen of distinction, diplomats, officers, and citizens, and all of them brought letters of introduction to Mr. Morris, who was esteemed the representative man of the city. From many of these foreigners we have published accounts of their travels, and from them gain vivid pictures of society in Philadelphia and other cities. There were Le Marquis de Chastellux, L'Abbé Robin, Citizen Mazzei, Le Prince de Broglie, Le Chevalier de la Luzerne, and many others. The first of these, who was here in 1780, in speaking of Mr. Morris says: "Mr. Morris is a large man, very simple in his manners, but his mind is subtle and acute, his head perfectly well organized, and he is as well versed in public affairs as in his own. . . . . His house is handsome, resembling perfectly the houses in London. He lives there without ostentation, but not without expense, for he spares nothing which can contribute to his happiness and that of Mrs. Morris, to whom he is much attached." In another place, in describing an entertainment at the Chevalier de la Luzerne's, he says: "On passing into the dining-room, the Chevalier de la Luzerne presented his hand to Mrs. Morris, and gave her the precedence, an honor pretty generally bestowed on her."

The Prince de Broglie, whose narrative was procured recently in France by the late Mr. Thomas Balch, describes a visit he made to Mrs. Morris in 1782, with considerable minuteness. "M. de la Luzerne conducted me to the house of Mrs. Morris to take tea. She is the wife of the Comptroller General of the United States. The house is simple but well furnished and very neat. The doors and tables are of a superb mahogany, and beautifully polished. The locks and hinges in brass were curiously bright. The porcelain cups were arranged with great precision. The mistress of the house had an agreeable expression, and was dressed altogether in white; in fact, everything appeared charming to me. I partook of most excellent tea, and I should be even now drinking it, I believe, if the Ambassador had not charitably notified me at the twelfth cup that I must put my spoon across it when I wished to finish with this sort of warm

water. He said to me: it is almost as ill bred to refuse a cup of tea when it is offered to you, as it would be for the mistress of the house to propose a fresh one when the ceremony of the spoon has notified her that we no longer wish to partake of it."

The Chevalier de la Luzerne spoken of in each of these narratives, who was the Ambassador from France, was on terms of most familiar intercourse with the family of Mr. Morris. I have before me an evidence of this in an invitation to Mr. and Mrs. Morris and Miss Livingston, "*together with the young family of Mrs. Morris*," to dine at Shoemaker's Place on the following Saturday afternoon; and it was from this nobleman that Mr. Morris, on his personal credit, obtained the twenty thousand pounds in specie which he sent to Washington, and enabled him to compel the capitulation of Cornwallis at Yorktown. The Miss Livingston mentioned in the invitation was Catharine, daughter of Governor William Livingston, of New Jersey, and younger sister of the beautiful Sarah Van Brugh Livingston, who became the wife of John Jay. She afterwards married Matthew Ridley, an Englishman residing in Baltimore, a particular friend of Mr. Morris, and under whose roof she most probably met him, as she made one of the Morris family for several years, during the absence of her sister in Europe, when Mr. Jay represented the Confederation, first as Minister to Spain, and subsequently in Paris as one of the Commissioners to arrange the definitive treaty of peace. Mrs. Jay, writing to Mrs. Morris from Madrid, under date of Sept. 1, 1780, says: "When I left Philadelphia I did not also leave the remembrance of the repeated instances of friendship which has endeared you to me; but had I been less sensible of them, surely your recent kindness to my dear Kitty could not fail of awakening my gratitude. Accept, my dear Mr. and Mrs. Morris, of my sincere thanks for your kindness to my sister; believe me, nothing has given me more pleasure than the happiness she has enjoyed under your hospitable roof."

These heartfelt words of Mrs. Jay were doubtless called forth by the letter she had received from her sister written

the previous July, in which she says: "In our last distresses from the invasion of the British troops, Mr. and Mrs. Morris sent for me to come and live with them. It was exceedingly friendly; and it is certainly no small alleviation to our infelicities to have such friends as can feel for us, and by their kind endeavors soothe our troubled bosoms to peace and tranquillity. They have at present a delightful situation—Springsberry. Mr. Morris has enlarged the buildings, and converted the green-house into a dining-room, which far exceeds their expectations in beauty and convenience."

The last day of summer, 1781, was a gala day in Philadelphia. The military were out and the whole city astir. General Washington was coming, and with him the Count de Rochambeau and other foreign and American officers of consideration, who were all on their way to join Lafayette near Yorktown, hoping, with the aid of De Grasse, who was hourly expected with his fleet, to capture Cornwallis and his army. At mid-day the general reached the suburbs, where he was met by a large number of people and escorted to the City Tavern, where he held an impromptu reception. From thence he went to the residence of Mr. Morris, who entertained the eminent officers and their staffs, together with many citizens, at dinner. In the evening the city was illuminated in honor of the distinguished visitors. A recent writer has said: "Justly fell to Robert Morris the honor of entertaining General Washington on this occasion; for it was to him the general owed the possibility of this sudden transfer of the army to Virginia. . . . . Next to Washington the country owes the triumph at Yorktown to Robert Morris."

In the fall of this same year Mr. Morris sent his two elder sons, Robert and Thomas, aged respectively twelve and ten years, to Europe, under the care of Mr. Mathew Ridley, before mentioned, for the purpose of being educated. They took with them a letter from their father to Dr. Franklin at Paris, in which Mr. Morris gives his reason for sending them to be that "the interruption given to the progress of learning, the distresses which the several seminaries in this country have undergone the various lucrative employments

to which masters and tutors have been invited in the progress of the present war, are circumstances which operate powerfully to the disadvantage of the present race of American youth, and which have induced me to take the determination of educating my two eldest sons, Robert and Thomas, in Europe." They carried with them also a letter from Mrs. Sarah Bache, Dr. Franklin's only daughter, to her son Benjamin Franklin Bache, who was being educated abroad, at the tender age of twelve, under his grandfather's care. In it she says: "My dear Benny:—This letter will be handed to you by the Master Morris's, who, you may remember, came to take leave of you the morning you left us. I am particularly happy in their going to Geneva, as I am sure it will give you great pleasure to see two old Friends, and have them go to the same school with you. Their Father and yours have the strongest Friendship for each other. I hope it will be the same with their sons, and that you will let them have a share in your heart with [*unintelligible*]. You will, I make no doubt, do everything in your power, to make Geneva agreeable to them; they are very clever boys, and will be strangers there compared with you."

They were placed to school in Geneva, where they remained five years, making during the vacations brief visits in the vicinity. One of these visits was to Paris the next year, which they passed with their mother's friend, Mrs. Jay, who wrote: "Your little sons, by passing their holiday with me, made me very happy. Robert so exceedingly resembles Mr. Morris, that I feel for him a respect mingled with my love; tho' at the same time I regret his distance from his father's example and counsel. Tommy (who is likewise a fine boy) told me that his last letters mentioned Hetty's and Maria's illness. I hope they are now quite recovered, as well as my dear Kitty. Will you embrace them for me?"

In the summer of 1786, under the tutelage of M. de Basseville, they went to Germany, and entered the University of Leipsic, where they remained nearly two years, returning home in the spring of 1788. The letters written during their absence, to them and to their tutor, by their father, are not

only fraught with good parental advice, but indicate and lay down a course and system of study, showing mature consideration, and a knowledge of the subject tru'y remarkable.

On the 25th of May, 1787, there met in Philadelphia the memorable Convention called together to frame a Constitution for the United States. To this body Mr. Morris, who had eleven years before affixed his bold signature to the Declaration of Independence, was a delegate, and it was upon his motion that George Washington was unanimously chosen to preside over its deliberations. To his sons at Leipsic Mr. Morris wrote June 25: "General Washington is now our guest, having taken up his abode at my house during the time he is to remain in this city. He is President of a convention of Delegates from the Thirteen States of America, who have met here for the purpose of revising, amending, and altering the Federal Government. There are gentlemen of great abilities employed in this Convention, many of whom were in the first Congress, and several that were concerned in forming the Articles of Confederation now about to be altered and amended. You, my children, ought to pray for a successful issue to their labours, as the result is to be a form of Government under which you are to live, and in the administration of which you may hereafter probably have a share, provided you qualify yourselves by application to your studies. The laws of nations, a knowledge of the Germanic System, and the constitutions of the several governments in Europe, and an intimate acquaintance with antient and modern history, are essentially necessary to entitle you to participate in the honor of serving a Free People in the administration of their Government."

Soon after the adjournment of the Convention, Mr. Morris visited Virginia in company with Mr. Gouverneur Morris, on matters of private business, where he was absent more than six months. The letters which passed between Mr. and Mrs. Morris during this period have fortunately been preserved, and show a cultivation and ease in epistolary composition now comparatively unknown. His first letter, written from Baltimore on his journey southward, contains a reference of

considerable interest on this occasion. He writes: "We arrived here last night all well, after a pleasant journey without any accident, and with fine weather and good roads. . . . I saw J. Hall at Havre de Grace. Charlotte Hall was at his house, but being dark and our journey having fatigued, we did not go thither. They were all very well, and next morning we visited the mansion of Mr. Hall; unluckily he had gone off (half an hour before we arrived) to a Plantation of his on the other side of Bush River. We were very graciously, I may say affectionately, received by three charming young ladies, Miss Molly, Patty, and Sophia. They gave us good breakfast and a hearty welcome, inquired particularly after you, and I pressed Molly to go up immediately with one of her sisters, and pass the winter with you, assuring them that was your wish, and that you would be exceedingly glad of their company. I flatter myself you will have them for companions for this winter, and I need not tell you how much I bid them welcome on my part. If Molly Hall does go up, I desire that you will engage Mr. Reinagle to teach her on the Harpsichord, and that you pay the expense; do this in the most delicate manner, such as I am sure your goodness of heart will dictate."

During her husband's absence, Mrs. Morris was made glad by the return from Europe of her sons Robert and Thomas, and it was during this same period that the clouds began to gather around the horizon of Mr. Morris's successful financial career. In October, 1788, he was again called into public life, by being elected by the Assembly to represent Pennsylvania in the first Senate of the United States, which was convened in New York on the 4th of March, 1789. On the very day of the meeting he writes to Mrs. Morris: "I arrived safe here at 7 o'clock this morning, before Mr. Constable was up. . . . . We met the members that are now in this city from the other States, opened the two houses by entering on the minutes the names of those who appeared, and adjourned until to-morrow at Eleven O'clock. There were only Eight Senators and thirteen assembly men, and before we can proceed to business there must be twelve Senators and thirty

members of assembly. . . . . Last night they fired 13 cannon from the Battery here over the Funeral of the Confederation, and this morning they saluted the new Government with 11 Cannon, being one for each of the States that have adopted the Constitution. The Flag was hoisted on the Fort, and Federal Colours were displayed on the top of the New Edifice and at several other places of the City; this, with ringing of Bells and Crowds of People at the meeting of Congress, gave the air of a grand Festival to the 4th of March, 1789, which, no doubt, will hereafter be celebrated as a new Era in the Annals of the World."

Congress did not organize for business until the eighth of April, and on the thirtieth, Washington was inaugurated the first President of the United States. Mrs. Washington did not accompany the general to New York, but on Tuesday, the nineteenth of May, accompanied by her grandchildren Eleanor and George Washington Parke Custis, set out in her private carriage for the seat of government. She received ovations all along the route, and on Thursday, when she reached Gray's Ferry, just outside of the city, she was met by Mrs. Morris, whose guest she was to be, and accompanied by her, entered the city escorted by a large concourse of military and citizens. On reaching High (Market) Street, near the residence of Mrs. Morris, she was greeted by the ringing of bells, the discharge of thirteen guns from a park of artillery, and the cheering shouts of an immense concourse of joyous people. Mrs. Washington remained with Mrs. Morris until the following Monday, and then departed for New York, taking with her Mrs. Morris and her daughter Maria in her carriage, as her guests. They were met on Wednesday at Elizabethtown by the President and Mr. Morris, and crossed over to New York on the President's barge. On Friday, the 29th of May, Mrs. Washington gave her first levee, at which Mrs. Morris was present, occupying the first place, on her right, and at all of her subsequent levees in New York and afterwards in Philadelphia, when present, Mrs. Morris occupied the honored place, as also did Mr. Morris when a guest at the public or private dinners given by Washington.

Mrs. Morris remained in New York with her husband until the fifth of July, when she returned home, he being detained at the seat of government by his senatorial duties. On the 17th he writes to her: "I have received your very pleasing letter of the 10th inst., and was made very happy in reading the narrative of your journey, of your reception at General Dickinson's, the Delaware Works, and, above all, in Market Street." A few days later he writes: "I paid a visit at the President's on Friday Evening (it is the only one I have paid since we parted). He is mended much in appearance and reality,—the Doctors, however, have had another cut at him, which has been very useful,—both he and Mrs. Washington were very particular in their enquiries after you, about your journey, and were pleased to hear that you had got safe home. Nelly Custis asked after Maria, and Mrs. Washington and the President after both Hetty and Maria."

Mainly through Mr. Morris's exertions the seat of government was removed the next year to Philadelphia. As soon as it was settled definitely that the removal should take place, Mr. Morris, whose residence on High Street east of Sixth Street was the finest private residence in the city, offered it for the presidential mansion. It was built of brick, three stories high, and the main building was forty-five feet six inches wide by fifty-two feet deep, and the kitchen and wash-house twenty feet wide by fifty-five feet deep, while the stables would accommodate twelve horses. The front of the house displayed four windows on the second and third floors, two on either side of the main hall, and on the first floor three windows, and a single door approached by three heavy gray stone steps. On each side of the house were vacant lots used as a garden, and containing trees and shrubbery. This property Mr. Morris bought in August, 1785, and rebuilt the house, which had been destroyed by fire New Year's day, 1780. When completed, he removed from his residence on Front Street below Dock Street, which he had occupied before and during the dark days of the revolutionary struggle. Washington wrote from Philadelphia, on his way to Mt. Vernon, to his Secretary, Tobias Lear, at New York: "The

house of Mr. Robert Morris had, previous to my arrival, been taken by the corporation for my residence. It is the best they could get. It is, I believe, the best single house in the city. Yet without additions it is inadequate to the commodious accommodation of my family." He subsequently wrote to Lear from Mt. Vernon: "Mr. and Mrs. Morris have insisted upon leaving the two large looking-glasses which are in their best rooms, because they have no place, they say, proper to remove them to, and because they are unwilling to hazzard taking them down. You will therefore let them have, instead, the choice of mine. . . . . Mrs. Morris has a mangle (I think it is called) for ironing clothes, which, as it is fixed in the place where it is commonly used, she proposes to leave and take mine. To this I have no objection, provided *mine is equally good and convenient*; but if I should obtain any advantages besides that of its being up and ready for use, I am not inclined to receive it. . . . . Mrs. Morris, who is a notable lady in family arrangement, can give you much information on all the conveniences about the house and buildings, and I dare say would rather consider it as a compliment to be consulted in those matters, as she is near, than a trouble to give her opinion of them." On yielding up his own residence to the President, Mr. Morris removed into the house at the southeast corner of Sixth and Market Streets, which had been built by the loyalist Joseph Galloway, and confiscated to the State on account of his adhesion to the British crown. Mr. Morris purchased it from the Executive Council of Pennsylvania shortly after he had purchased the *presidential* mansion, to which it adjoined.

The President and Mrs. Washington arrived in Philadelphia from Mt. Vernon towards the end of November, and took possession of their house, where on Christmas night the first levee in Philadelphia was given. The close friendship which existed between Mr. Morris and the chief soon spread to their respective families, and an intimacy was engendered which neither misfortune nor time could diminish. That Robert Morris was Washington's most intimate friend—the man who entered nearest to his heart, and to whom he most

unbended—is proverbially well known, and the following incident of his last levee, held a few days before his retiring from the presidency, has been preserved and handed down by an eye-witness:[1] "Washington received his guests, standing between the windows in his back drawing-room. The company, entering a front room and passing through an unfolding door, made their salutations to the President, and turning off, stood on one side. His manner was courteous, of course, but always on these occasions somewhat reserved. He did not give his hand, but merely bowed, which was the mode for that day. Mr. Morris came in, and when the President saw him entering the room, he advanced to meet him, and shook him heartily by the hand: Mr. Morris, in allusion partly, perhaps, to the day which may have been cloudy, but more to the event, repeating as he came forward the lines:—

> 'The day is overcast, the morning lowers,
> And heavily in clouds brings on the day—
> The great, the important day.'"

On the 4th of March, 1797, Washington's second term expired with the installation of John Adams into the executive chair. The day preceding he had given a farewell dinner, at which both Mr. and Mrs. Morris were present. Bishop White, who was also one of the guests, says: "During the dinner much hilarity prevailed; but on the removal of the cloth it was put an end to by the President, certainly without design. Having filled his glass, he addressed the company, with a smile on his countenance, saying: 'Ladies and gentlemen, this is the last time I shall drink your health as a public man; I do it with sincerity, wishing you all possible happiness.' There was an end to all pleasantry, and there was not a dry eye among the company." He showed his esteem for Mrs. Morris by presenting her with a small profile portrait of himself, by the Marchioness de Brehan, with this autograph presentation: "The President's compliments accompany the inclosed to Mrs. Morris."

We now approach near to the period of her husband's great financial misfortunes, brought on by his striving after large possessions and his misplaced confidence in one of his asso-

[1] The late Hon. John B. Wallace.

ciates. He purchased, at merely nominal prices, varying from a few cents to a dollar an acre, many millions of acres of unseated lands in the several States of the Union, some individually and others in conjunction with John Nicholson and James Greenleaf, with whom he subsequently organized the North American Land Company in February, 1795. Early in the following year Morris and Nicholson found that they had joined their fortunes with the wrong man, and endeavored to extricate themselves by purchasing his interest, but alas! too late; the evil seed planted by Greenleaf was too widespread, and had taken too deep root, to be killed out and eradicated, and thus by his dishonest and rascally conduct was Robert Morris dragged under and sacrificed. In the autumn of 1796, Mr. Morris passed some time in Washington, or, as it was then called, "The Federal City,"—where Major L'Enfant, who had been the architect of the enormous pile, partly erected, on the square bounded by Seventh Street, Eighth Street, Chestnut Street, and Walnut Street, and known as "Morris's Folly," was engaged in laying out the city plans,—endeavoring to dispose of lots, a large number of which Mr. Morris had purchased when it was decided that *there* should be the permanent capitol of the country.

Finally the crisis came on the fifteenth of February, 1798. On that day he was arrested at the suit of one Charles Eddy, and from "the Hills" he writes to Nicholson: "I am here in custody of a sheriff's officer. Charles Eddy is the most hardened villain God ever made. I believe if I had bank bills to pay him with he would refuse them on the ground of their not being a legal tender." The next day he was taken to the debtor's apartment of the old Prune Street Prison, where he was confined until liberated by the operation of the General Bankrupt Law on the twenty-sixth of August, 1801, after undergoing an imprisonment of three years, six months, and ten days. The country for whose independence, safety, and salvation he had pledged and given his private fortune in the hour of its deepest depression and most desperate need, forgot him when adversity crowded upon him, and neither by word, act, or deed helped to alleviate the burden of his unfortunate situation. The Congress which, without his aid,

never would have had an existence to hold a session, sat within the shadow of his prison walls, but lifted not a voice or hand to save him. Yet one, noble above all, did not forget him. His great compeer, with Trenton and Yorktown fresh in his mind, remembered who had given him the gold which gave the two decisive conflicts of the war. In a letter written by Washington to Mrs. Eliza Powell, he says: "Poor Mrs. Morris! I feel much for her situation; and earnestly pray that Mr. Morris may, and soon, work through all his difficulties; in which I am persuaded that all who know him heartily join me; as they do, that their ease, quiet, and domestic enjoyments may be perfectly restored." Late in 1798, when Washington visited Philadelphia to collect and organize an army, at the time that the relations with France made such a measure necessary, "he paid his first visit to the prison-house of Robert Morris." Nor was this all. The following year Mrs. Morris, with her daughter Maria, visited her eldest daughter Hetty—Mrs. James Marshall, of Virginia, and while there received the following cordial and gratifying *joint* letter:—

"Mount Vernon, September 21, 1799.

"Our Dear Madam—We never learnt with certainty, until we had the pleasure of seeing Mr. White (since his return from Frederick), that you were at Winchester.

We hope it is unnecessary to repeat in this place how happy we should be to see you and Miss Morris under our roof for as long a stay as you shall find convenient before you return to Philadelphia; for be assured we ever have and still do retain the most affectionate regard for you, Mr. Morris, and the family.

With the highest esteem and regard, and best wishes for the health and happiness of the family you are in, we are,

Dear Madam,

Your most obedient and very

Humble servants,

GO. WASHINGTON,

MARTHA WASHINGTON.

To Mrs. Morris,
in Winchester."

This flattering invitation reached Mrs. Morris just as she was starting for Philadelphia, whither she had been called by the breaking out of the malignant fever of 1799. Mr. Morris wrote to his son Thomas on the seventh of September: "My good health continues, altho' our city is again afflicted with sickness. I have, however, got an order of Court for my removal into the country when I shall deem my present situation dangerous; and in consequence thereof I believe Robert will go next week to Winchester to bring back your mother and Maria." This was the third visit of the fever; during that of the previous year Mrs. Morris lost her third son, William, who died October 9th, 1798, in his twenty-seventh year. Mr. Morris communicates it to Thomas the next day in a letter full of feeling: "In the midst of grief and distress I write these lines, altho' they will make you a participator of it. Could the event be kept from your knowledge I would spare your friendly feelings for the loss of a worthy brother. Poor William, he has fallen the untimely victim of a billious remitting fever (not the prevailing Malignant Fever) which has been hanging about him for a month past; during that time he lived low and took medicine, but without effect, and last Friday night he was seriously attacked; two able Physicians did all they could for him, but in vain. He died yesterday in the forenoon, and his body was immediately deposited in the Family Vault at Christ Church. I have lost in him not only a dutiful son, but a friend and companion; I have lost those hopes which were hung upon his sense, virtue, and talents. Had he been spared, he would have made a fine figure in this world. The only comfort left upon his subject, that he is translated pure and uncontaminated from this world of trouble to enjoy that bliss which is promised in another to the virtuous." This young man showed considerable promise, if an opinion may be formed from the letters he addressed to his parents from London and Paris in the years '94 and '95. They disclose an observing and discriminating mind, improved by no little taste and cultivation.

During the confinement of Mr. Morris, his faithful and devoted wife and daughter, Maria, were his constant companions.

Day after day Mrs. Morris visited the prison, and dined at the cell-table of her unfortunate but noble husband, and while the malignant fevers which raged terribly in Prune Street infested the city, she never left him, but continued her daily visits until she walked through two rows of coffins, piled from floor to ceiling, in reaching his room. With death around him and beside him, in this, its more direful form, he had no personal fear. To John Nicholson he writes October 15th, 1798: "It is wonderful, but, notwithstanding the danger is now at my chamber door,—for Hofner is in the room I formerly occupied,—I feel no kind of apprehension, and my only anxiety is for my wife and daughter and these poor sick people. I hope my life will be spared, for the sake of my family, until I get my affairs settled." Three days later he says to the same correspondent: "I think of moving out of my room into that formerly occupied by Dr. Ruston, in the back part of the house; if I do this, it is to give some comfort to Mrs. Morris, whose distress pierces my heart. As to myself, I cannot feel afraid or alarmed at the neighborhood of this disease, although I have tried." By the care of a beneficent Providence he was guarded and protected through the ravages of this fell destroyer.

At last Mr. Morris was released from prison. On "Monday morning, August 27th, 1801," he writes to his son Thomas: "As I know the contents of this letter will be very pleasing to you and your family, I embrace the first opportunity to tell you that I obtained my liberty last evening, and had the inexpressible satisfaction to find myself again restored to my home and family." Alas! what a far different home he entered to the one he left. Mrs. Morris at this period was living in a small establishment on the east side of Twelfth Street, midway between Market and Chestnut Streets, which she had been enabled to keep together through the instrumentality of Mr. Gouverneur Morris, who, not a relative, was the best true friend Robert Morris ever had. The title to the four tracts containing three million three hundred thousand acres in the Genesee country, which had been conveyed to the Holland Land Company by Mr. Morris in 1792 and 1793, proved defective and required confirming,

for which Gouverneur Morris compelled the company to pay Mrs. Morris an annuity of fifteen hundred dollars during her life, and this was all she had upon which to live. Compare this picture with those we have presented of a decade and a score of years before. *Here*, a broken-down old man, in his sixty-eighth year, without one cent that he can call his own, only protected from the storms of heaven by a roof preserved through the thoughtful instrumentality of an old friend. *There*, the first man of the city—the first in wealth, in influence, and in position—receiving and entertaining Washington and the officers of the allied armies on their way to the crowning success of the war; and again when the city of his adoption becomes the capital of the Union, yielding up his private residence—the most magnificent in the city—for the presidential mansion. These vast changes he survived not quite five years. On the seventh of May, 1806, he was released from the harassing cares of this mortal life, and found a resting-place in the family vault, Christ Church, Second Street, Philadelphia.

Mr. Morris was a man of remarkable presence—large in stature, and with a countenance peculiarly open and noble; he impressed all who approached him with the force of his character and the strength of his ability. There are portraits of him painted by Peale, Pine, Trumbull, and Stuart. He possessed a mind as vigorous and strong as his body—*mens sana in corpore sano*. He wrote with a clearness, purity, and strength which is only equalled by the volume of his correspondence; the number of letters which he wrote with his own hand, in the midst of the most engrossing public and private duties, being almost miraculous. He was a genial man, fond of good cheer, and delighted in sprightly conversation and sparkling wit. That he was warm-hearted, noble, and generous, his whole life evidences. On this occasion, let me read to you the tender affectionate words he wrote to Gouverneur Morris at Paris, informing him of Mrs. White's death:—

Philadelphia, Jan'y 2d, 1791.

My Dear Friend—I have just parted from my family, who are all in mourning. Old Mrs. White, my wife's mother,

now lies a corpse in her own house. She expired on Friday evening, the 31st ult., after a short illness, occasioned by a severe cold taken accidentally, and treated with neglect until too late. She did not suffer much pain, and being in her 71st year, her end was to be looked for; but notwithstanding these circumstances it came unexpectedly, and therefore has given a greater shock to the feelings of her two children than otherwise it would. My wife told me a while ago, when I mentioned that I had been writing to you, that she recollected you having often professed a regard and esteem for her mother, and therefore requested me to mention the decease to you. The old lady was a sensible, good woman, and as such, exclusive of all considerations of connection, I valued and respected her exceedingly.

We have ever been on terms of the most friendly intercourse, and I regret the loss of her as much as if she had been my own mother. Her daughter grieves at the loss, but has too much sense and too much integrity of mind to make parade of grief. To-morrow we shall attend her remains to the grave, at least myself and my children will; but I do not intend that Mrs. Morris shall, for the weather is extreamly cold, and I do not choose that she should risque her health. I hope, my dear Governeur, that you and I may live long enough to meet again in this world. I declare to you, if I were to indulge a doubt of it, my happiness would be much diminished, and my stock of happiness has already been so much curtailed by adversity that I can spare very little of the little now left.

I hope that you may long be spared an ornament of your species; an honor to humanity, and be permitted the full enjoyments of all the happiness that man is capable of. Farewell. You never had nor ever will have a more sincere Friend than

ROB'T. MORRIS.

Mr. Morris possessed considerable taste for the fine arts, and encouraged them liberally. For Robert Edge Pine, the English portrait painter, he built a house on Eighth Street,

below Market, adapted for the exhibition of his pictures and the prosecution of his painting. He aided Jardella, an Italian sculptor of no mean merit, to establish himself in Philadelphia, and during the French Revolution he imported some of the finest Gobelin tapestry and French marquetry work ever brought to this country. His will, written by his own hand two years before his death, closes with these philosophical remarks:—

"Here I have to express my regret at having lost a very large fortune acquired by honest industry, which I had long hoped and expected to enjoy with my family during my own life, and then to distribute it among those of them that should outlive me. Fate has determined otherwise, and we must submit to the decree, which I have endeavored to do with patience and fortitude."

Such is a portraiture of the man whom Mary White married, and whom she survived twenty-one years.

After the death of her husband, Mrs. Morris removed to Chestnut Street, above Tenth, on the south side, and here she resided when Lafayette made his famous tour through the States in 1824. He arrived in Philadelphia on Tuesday morning, September 29th, and was tendered the grandest ovation he received during his visit as the nation's guest. On the evening of his arrival he called upon Mrs. Morris, making her his first private call in the city, thus showing the deep affection and respect which a separation of thirty-seven years, amid the vicissitudes of momentous times and the fearful events of the French Revolution, could not erase. At his especial personal request, she attended the grand civic ball given in his honor at the new Chestnut Street Theatre, on the night of Monday, October 5th. She was at this time in her seventy-sixth year. On Tuesday, the sixteenth of January, 1827, she joined her beloved husband in the unknown land of departed spirits, and was buried in the family vault.

Without the attractions of beauty, Mrs. Morris possessed the highest qualities of mind and heart. She was tall, graceful, and commanding, with a stately dignity of manner which

ever made a controlling impression upon all with whom she was brought in contact. There are three portraits of her; one, an execrable thing by Charles Wilson Peale, in Independence Hall; the second, a beautiful miniature by Trumbull, painted about 1790, in the possession of her granddaughter, Mrs. Ambler: and the third, an unfinished head, by Gilbert Stuart, in the gallery of the Lenox Library, New York, painted shortly before her death, and said to be the last female head Stuart painted. From an obituary which appeared some time after her decease, I extract the following:—

"On Tuesday, the 16th inst., departed this life, in the 78th year of her age, Mrs. Mary Morris, relict of Robert Morris, Esq., formerly a member of the Legislature of this Commonwealth, a member of Congress long before the Declaration of Independence, of which instrument he was one of the signers, the Minister of Finance during the latter years of the Revolutionary War, a member of the Convention which established the present Constitution of the United States, and a Senator in the first Congress after its adoption.

"His deceased widow, after having enjoyed with him without arrogance the wealth and the honours of the early and the middle years of his life, descended with him, without repining, to the privations incident to the reverses of his fortune towards the close of it. Since his decease, some of the liveliest of her gratifications were the occasions frequently occurring of civilities and services tendered to her by men who dated the beginnings of their successes in their respective occupations to the patronage and the aids furnished to them by her deceased husband in the course of his successful pursuits of commerce, some of whose names had been unknown to her until the occasions which called forth the expressions of their gratitude.

"Having lived in the unostentatious profession of religion, and in the faithful discharge of her relative duties, she met the event of death with entire resignation: and, as is trusted, with a well-grounded hope of the mercy of God, through the merits of the Redeemer."

Mr. and Mrs. Morris had seven children, the record of whose births I read from the entries made by Mr. Morris in the family Bible:—

"March 2d, 1769, Robert Morris was married to Mary, his wife.

"Decem'r 19th, 1769, was born Robert, their son, at ¼ before 11 o'clock at night.

"Feb'y 26, 1771, Thos., their second son, was born at 7 o'clock in the evening.

"Aug'st 9th, 1772, William, their third son, was born at 10 o'clock in the evening.

"July 30, 1774, Hetty, their daughter, was born at ¼ past one o'clock at night.

"July 11th, 1777, Charles, their fourth son, was born at 10 o'clock at night.

"April 24, 1779, Maria, their second daughter, was born at 7 o'clock in the morning.

"July 24, 1784, Henry, their fifth son, was born at half after three o'clock in the morning."

FINIS.